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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: JUNE 16, 2009

Summary: Reports and photographs of Army Chief General Kayani's inspection of military offensive zone onboard an F-16 dominated headlines in all newspapers on Tuesday. His "vow to defend the nation 'at all cost'" also received front page coverage. All newspapers highlighted reports that "President Zardari to hold talks with Indian Prime Minister Singh today (Tuesday)" on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit in Yekaterinburg (Russia). Also garnering front page attention was news that the "security forces claimed to have killed 50 Taliban in operations in Mohmand, Bajaur, Malakand and Bannu." Foreign Minister Qureshi's statement that the "Taliban could spread beyond its (Pakistan's) borders to India and as far as the Persian Gulf, unless it receives international aid to help battle militancy on its soil" received prominent display. Several newspapers highlighted U.S. Embassy's announcement to "host weekly live web chat series" to share information about the U.S. on different themes.

Most major newspapers ran editorials weighing the pros and cons of the impending military operation to eliminate TTP (Tehrik Taliban Pakistan) chief Baitullah Mehsud and dismantle his network. The center-right national English daily "The Nation," warned that "compared to Swat, a military operation in South Waziristan could turn out to be more expansive in both human and material terms." Terming the "deals with Taliban" as "utter folly," the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" wrote: "The time has come to go for the final kill, so we can all reclaim a country that has, village by village, town by town, been stolen away from us." Commenting on the growing terror incidents, the liberal Urdu daily "Express," noted that "countering this (threat) is possible only if the operation against militancy continues until militants are completely defeated." End Summary.

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News Stories  
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"Kayani Inspects Operation Area Onboard F-16" "Daily Times" (06/16)

"Chief of Army Staff Gen. Ashfaq Kayani co-piloted an F-16 over Swat on Monday, and vowed to defend the nation 'at all costs.' During a visit to the PAF operational base, he told airmen Operation Rah-e-Rast had been the last resort after all peaceful options had been exhausted. He said the Pakistan Air Force and the Pakistan Army were united, and were participating in Operation Rah-e-Rast shoulder-to-shoulder."

"Zardari To Hold Talks With Singh Today" "Dawn" (06/16)

"Leaders of India and Pakistan will hold talks in Russia on Tuesday, raising expectations their first meeting since the Mumbai attacks in November last year will ease tension between the two country. Russian officials said Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Asif Ali Zardari would meet on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit in Hekaterinburg."

"50 Taliban Killed In Military Operations" "Daily Times" (06/16)

"Security forces personnel on Monday claimed to have killed 50 Taliban in operations in Mohmand, Bajaur, Malakand and Bannu during the past 24 hours.... Security forces also consolidated their positions and continued search operations in Godhand Banda and Arkot in Swat, Matta and Aligrama."

"Taliban Can Spread To India, Persian Gulf: FM" "The Nation" (06/16)

"Pakistan has warned that the Taliban could spread beyond its borders to neighboring India and as far as the Persian Gulf, unless it receives International aid to help battle militancy on its soil, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi told the Financial Times on Monday."

"U.S. Embassy Islamabad Hosts Live Web Chat Series to Discover 'US'" "Pakistan Observer," "The Statesman," "Jang," "Express" (06/16)

"The U.S. Embassy Islamabad will host a series of weekly live web chats with American diplomats to share information about the U.S. on different themes and topics of interest to the people of Pakistan. The web chats take place every Thursday from 3:00 to 4:00 pm local time."

"Offensive Against Baitullah Begins Today" "The News" (06/16)

"The government will launch a full-scale military offensive against Baitullah Mahsud-led Taliban in South Waziristan today (Tuesday) in which besides regular armed forces, Pakistan Air Force (PAF) jet fighters would also be used in a decisive action. Sources told 'The News' that the decision about military operation was taken at a high-level meeting held with Chief of Army Staff Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani on Monday."

"Mehsuds Hedge Their Bets As Game On To Isolate Baitullah" "Dawn" (06/16)

"When jets of the Pakistan Air Force struck Makeen - a key trade centre of Mehsud tribe in South Waziristan - last week, ostensibly to avenge the suicide bombing in Lahore that killed religious scholar Dr. Sarfaraz Naeemi, it was the culmination of a two-month long in-house debate within the military establishment on how to deal with Baitullah Mehsud. It was, perhaps, the first significant indication that the military establishment - long derided for avoiding taking the Chief of Pakistani Taliban head-on - had had enough. 'He has a hand in virtually every terrorist attack in Pakistan,' Army Chief Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani had said recently. 'We wanted to deliver a message to Baitullah. If he carries out a suicide bombing, then there will be a response and that he can't get away with these attacks. There will be a quid pro quo,' a senior military officer said."

"Janikhel Area Of FR Bannu Cleared" "Dawn" (06/16)

"Security forces cleared FR Bannu's Janikhel tehsil, set up checkpoints and started action against the Gorbaz tribe on the Miramshah Road on Monday morning. Militants had used the area to cross into Waziristan after kidnapping students of the Razmak Cadet College early this month."

"Zardari Urge World To Support Pakistan In Anti-Terror War" "Dawn" (06/16)

"President Asif Ali Zardari has urged the international community to fully support Pakistan's efforts in war against terrorism and help it in overcoming the multitude of challenges, including winning hearts and minds of people. 'This is a challenge of our times and a challenge for the world. We have two wars. One is physical against militants, other is to look after the internally displaced people."

World has to come forward to support us,' Mr. Zardari said in an interview with Russia Today. The President Zardari, who is in Russia to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit."

"PM Urges U.S. To Waive Debts" "Pakistan Observer" (06/16)

The Prime Minister was talking to Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs delegation headed by Prof. Paolo Cotta-Ramsunio, Secretary General Pugwash Conferences which called on him at the Prime Minister's House Monday morning.... The Prime Minister while briefing the visitors over the success of ongoing military operation, the relief efforts being undertaken to cater to the needs of the influx of displaced persons and the ramification of the situation on Pakistan's economy called upon the U.S. to write off Pakistan's debt, fast track the Kerry Lugar and ROZ's bills' passage through the Congress and to enhance the level of intelligence sharing with Pakistan to help his government to bring the present campaign against militants to its logical end."

"Extremists Buying Children To Use As Bombers: Malik" "The News" (06/16)

"Interior Minister Rehman Malik has said the government is determined to continue the war against terrorism till the Taliban are flushed out of the country. He said that the terrorists were using children for their barbarous terrorist activities, adding a suicide bomber was paid Rupees 500,000 to Rupees 2.5 million from terrorist outfits. He was speaking at an award distribution ceremony for martyred and other police officials at the National Library Auditorium in Islamabad on Monday."

"Terrorists Getting Arms From Afghanistan: Malik" "Pakistan Observer" (06/16)

"Interior Minister Rehman Malik said here on Monday that terrorists operating in Pakistan are being supplied sophisticated arms and ammunition from neighboring Afghanistan and the matter has been taken up with Afghan President Hamid Karzai. He was speaking at an award distribution ceremony for martyred and other police officials at the National Library Auditorium in Islamabad on Monday."

"U.S. Lawmaker For Quick Launch Of ROZs In Pakistan" "The News" (06/16)

"Congressman Chris Van Hollen, a leading proponent of the just passed reconstruction opportunity zones (ROZs) program in the U.S. House of Representatives, has called on the Senate to approve the plan urgently to help Pakistan secure its restive northwestern regions. 'With this bill, we are taking steps to forge a true strategic partnership with Pakistan and its people, strengthen its democratic government, and help Pakistan to be a force for stability in this volatile region,' he said, appreciating Islamabad's military offensive to oust the Taliban insurgents from Swat and tribal areas."

"Pakistan, Russia Vow New Chapter In Ties" "The News" (06/16)

"Pakistan and Russia on Monday vowed to open a new chapter in their relationships with joint efforts to boost their economic ties and fight terrorism and extremism. This promise was made in Yekaterinburg in a meeting between President Asif Ali Zardari and his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev on the sidelines of the six-member Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit."

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Editorials/Op-eds  
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"A New Offensive," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (06/16)

"The announcement of the launching of a comprehensive and decisive operation to eliminate TTP Chief Baitullah Mehsud and dismantle his network, should come as no surprise.... Compared to Swat, a military operation in South Waziristan could turn out to be more expensive in both human and material terms. It is an area where moving supplies and troops requires tying up thousands of troops to

picket hilltops and valleys to avoid ambushes.... One hopes the government has weighed all the pros and cons of the operation. Governor Owais Ghani's statement accusing the Mehsud tribe of ignoring the repeated warnings to put an end to their 'miscreant' activities indicates the government wants to take on the entire tribe. Many would advise it to consider the dangers behind this."

"The Baitullah Mission," an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (06/16)

"There are many implications and many things that need to be pondered carefully while devising a strategy. But the fact also is that at the present, a very real momentum against terrorism has been built. People everywhere are increasingly united in their stance against militancy.... These factors mean it may therefore be wise to carry through with the tide and finish of the work that has been begun.... There seems to be little sense in allowing the Taliban time to re-group and re-organize.... The time has come to go for the final kill, so we can all reclaim a country that has, village by village, town by town, been stolen away from us."

"Decision To Start Operation Against Baitullah Mehsud," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (06/16)

"Growing terrorist incidents are once again posing a challenge to the writ of the state. Countering this is possible only if the operation against militancy continues until militants are completely defeated; the government should not succumb to any pressure at all. It is encouraging that we are heading in the right direction and that there is complete harmony between the army and the government in this regard."

"Militancy's HQ," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (06/16)

"What is not clear though at the moment is what exactly the security forces' plan is. Will they only go after Baitullah Mehsud and his network or will they try and clean up both South and North Waziristan Agency of all militants?... But remains to be seen how far the state is willing to go, the losses it is willing to accept, the cost it is ready to impose on the local populations and to what extent it is ready to disrupt the various networks of militants that are intertwined. Just as importantly, the state must be careful about who it sees as its allies. Baitullah Mehsud has many rivals and enemies among the Mehsud tribe, but defeating him with the help of others only to see those others become the next menace - that must not be allowed to happen."

"Attacking Baitullah's Den," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (06/16)

"South Waziristan is a stronghold on many counts. Baitullah and his friends of the FATA region in varying degrees of strength.... There are reports not only that the Taliban are cornered but that Al Qaeda too is squeezed for resources and is appealing internationally for funds. This could be the time to strike.... There is no doubt that the operation in South Waziristan, if it materializes, will have to be well-coordinated at the international level. As for inside Pakistan, the national consensus against the Taliban is intact and will favor the war being taken to the enemy instead of waiting for the enemy to continue to strike at will."

"Chasing Mehsud," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (06/16)

"Pakistan army is once again set to apply force to capture the militants, especially Baitullah Mehsud, who is alleged of harboring foreign troops on the Pakistani soil. The use of military force is an important element in dealing with an insurgency. The government, belatedly realizing the need to capture or kill Baitullah Mehsud and other Taliban leaders after their activities against the peaceful religious leaders, including Maulana Sarfaraz Naeemi. To cope with a precarious internal and external situation, the government has done well to make a coordinated effort to address this issue, which surely is central to Pakistan's survival as an independent state. This endeavor should be taken to its logical end, as leaving it halfway could prove disastrous."

"Why Not Reflect, Consult Before Opening New Fronts?," an editorial in the leading mass circulation populist, often sensational Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (06/16)

"NWFP Governor Awais Ghani has announced a decisive military operation against TTP Chief Baitullah Mehsud and his associates.... Expanding the scope of the operation will lead to more death and destruction and new problems for the government.... It is also imperative that the government should take parliament's approval before launching the operation. The discussion in the parliament should be utilized to garner support of political parties.... We want to say once again that only dialogue for the sake of national interest and not the use of excessive force can bring a lasting solution to the problem. Use of force never solved any problem."

"Announcement For Decisive Operation By NWFP Governor," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (06/16)

"NWFP Governor Awais Ghani has announced decisive action against banned TTP and militants.... As a reaction to the ongoing operation, the entire country is in the grip of worst terrorism and suicide attacks. If the military operation was expanded further the possibility of more terrorism and more suicide attacks can't be ruled out. Although the Frontier Governor talked of decisive operation, immediate results of the operation are not in sight. Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani is now admitting that this is guerilla warfare and the gun cannot solve every problem."

"Decisive Action Against Baitullah," an op-ed by Rahimullah Yusufzai in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (06/16)

"No military operation against Taliban militants in NWFP could be decisive without taking on and defeating the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) head, Baitullah Mehsud.... The major threat was none else but the TTP founder and the main battlefield was always going to be Waziristan.... Baitullah Mehsud is the most powerful Pakistan Taliban commander. He is capable of carrying out suicide bombings and terrorist attacks in all major cities of Pakistan, kidnapping important people and using them as bargaining chip, and activating fighters from TTP units all over NWFP and his Jihadi allies in Punjab and Sindh to put pressure on the government to once again seek peace with him. He has done this in the past and will try to do so again."

"A Hand Moving Towards Nuclear Capability," an op-ed by Ayaz Khan in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (06/16)

"Our security and intelligence agencies have often complained to the U.S. that it has avoided taking any action against Baitullah Mehsud. [U.S.] has made claims of having killed several persons linked to Al Qaeda and terrorists in drone attacks -- one person who has not been targeted is Baitullah Mehsud. In the past, Baitullah Mehsud was also seen entering and exiting the U.S. Embassy.... Now that the NWFP Governor has announced a military operation against Baitullah Mehsud, the first voice raised in opposition has come from the U.S. American scholar Nicholas Schmidle has said that the time is not right for an operation in South Waziristan... The U.S. has also announced a reward for help in capturing Mehsud, but it would not want an important pawn like Mehsud to be targeted. Soon you will see that the U.S. will oppose, at the official level, an operation in South Waziristan. And then visitors from the U.S. will start pouring in. An operation against Baitullah Mehsud during Pervez Musharraf's time was stopped just when the noose was being tightened around him. It now remains to be seen how our political and military leadership will face up to U.S. pressure this time."

"Evaluating The Orders," an op-ed by Kamran Shafi in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (06/16)

"It has been decided that a comprehensive and decisive operation will be launched to eliminate Baitullah Mehsud and dismantle his network.... The conspiracies range from an American plot to push more Taliban into Pakistan so as to tie up the army in FATA while they 'take out' our nuclear weapons and missiles, and thence to break up Pakistan. Here is one published in a daily on May 28,

2009, verbatim: 'Once Pakistan is denuclearized the U.S. would encourage Pakistan's Balkanisation into a Baloch U.S. satellite, a city state of MQM in Karachi, a Pakhtunistan badly bombed and in tatters and a Punjab stripped of nuclear potential, kicked and bullied by India. A Northern Area republic which is a U.S. lackey unless China decides to call the U.S. bluff by occupying the Northern Area. 'What is the answer to this: an immediate clean break with U.S./NATO and closing all NATO/U.S. supply lines to Afghanistan; mining and barbed wiring the Afghan Pakistan border; allowing the Fata agencies to import goods for Afghanistan duty free and scrapping the old Afghan Transit Trade Accord thus economically boosting the FATA. A military alliance with China with a Chinese naval base at Gwadar; rapprochement with Russia and offering the Russians free port facilities at Gwadar; creation of a maritime province in Gwadar and Lasbela districts insulating these areas from the Baloch Sardars on payroll of U.S. intelligence; creation of a Pashtun province in the Pashtun districts of Balochistan with Quetta as its capital.' I ask you. These brilliant thoughts end thus: Everything is not inevitable in history."

"Dilemmas Of Expanding The War," an op-ed by Dr. Maleeha Lodhi in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (06/16)

"The decision to take the fight to Waziristan has come in the wake of a mounting reign of terror unleashed by militants.... Improved tactics, higher morale and greater confidence to fight insurgency are all important elements of this military momentum. As important is the momentum of public opinion. The public support that has been building up for a decisive crackdown on militants provides a crucial enabling political environment to expand the military operation.... Factoring into future strategy the lessons learned from past mistakes is the only way to avoid repeating them."

"This Is A Long War," an op-ed by Raza Rumi in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (06/16)

"The military operation is just the beginning. It is going to be a war, if the consensus is further deepened and nurtured, for the next few years given the way it is spilling into big cities, engulfing sectarian and ethnic tensions germane to Pakistan's society. It has to be fought not just militarily either. It has to be waged within the media, within the education system and above all with a credible ideological alternative to suicidal anti-Americanism and vague notions of tribal justice founded on misogyny.... But the misleading currents of analyses that this is an American war, and somehow the Taliban have public support in pockets of Pakistan, are inherently dangerous propaganda tools deliberately cultivated to suit certain interests."

"Anti-Terrorism Force," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (06/16)

"The methods pursued by the extremists at work in Pakistan resemble a form of urban warfare where it is not easy to tell a terrorist from a civilian. All a militant has to do to pass for a non-combatant is to temporarily abandon his weapon. This allows terrorists to melt at will into the civilian population, making the countering of possible attacks doubly difficult.... There is, therefore, a need to constitute a new security force trained specifically to counter terrorism.... The ability to tell a terrorist from a non-combatant will depend on local knowledge and require an ear-to-the-ground approach."

"Ambassador Rebuts The FM," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (06/16)

"There was yet another drone attack by the United States killing at least five people in Latha region of South Waziristan Agency on Sunday. Echoing feelings of the people, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has resented these attacks saying that the Government has told Washington in clear terms that these were counter-productive and must be stopped forthwith. However, the country's representative in the U.S. capital Hussain Haqqani, who is understandably very close to some of the policy-makers has claimed that drone attacks were very much productive as many of the top leaders of Al-Qaeda had been killed in these attacks. It seems that

during his intensive interaction, the Ambassador, instead of influencing the thinking of the U.S. policy-makers, has himself fallen victim to American point of view as his remarks give an impression as if he was speaking for the U.S. and not for Pakistan.... The entire nation is one in condemning the persistent violation of the country's sovereignty by the arrogant superpower.... A dispassionate assessment of what is happening in FATA and Swat would reveal that each drone and missile attack has contributed to increase in militancy."

"Hussain Haqqani: Whose Ambassador?," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (06/16)

"Pakistan Ambassador in the U.S. Hussain Haqqani said that drone attacks in tribal areas proved useful.... Our rulers do not have the courage to condemn the drone attacks, but each one of them expressed reservation on the attacks and asked for stopping them. But Hussain Haqqani describes them as useful.... In view of his statements people describe him as the American and not Pakistani Ambassador. The government should appoint another ambassador to the U.S. who should be patriotic and a Pakistani."

"Mere Eyewash," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (06/16)

"The Israeli Prime Minister has ruled out a complete halt to the Jewish settlements. In reality, this shows that Israel is not at all serious about the peace process. What Hamas calls the racist and extremist ideology of Netanyahu, who has lived up to his reputation of being a hawk, reflects the truth. The U.S., with President Obama at the helm, would have to put more pressure on the Jewish entity. A just settlement of the issue is central to winning the hearts and minds of Muslims. Peace will remain elusive until the formation of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state."

"Peace Process Scuttled," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (06/16)

"The much-awaited speech went totally against President Barack Obama's clear-cut stance that Israel must halt all settlement activity and that his administration stood categorically for a two-state solution. By insisting that Jerusalem would remain Israel's capital, Mr. Netanyahu ruled out the final status negotiations, and by demanding that Israel be recognized as a Jewish state he made it clear Palestinian refugees would not be allowed to return to their soil from where they were made to flee during the 1948-49 fighting. More astonishingly, he not only rejected President Barack Obama's call for a settlements freeze, he said the settlements should be allowed to grow, saying the settlers were 'not the enemy of peace - they are our brothers and sisters.' The rebuff to President Obama's peace efforts is obvious, for Mr. Netanyahu has given the world an unabashed dose of his intransigence."

"A New Beginning," an op-ed by Dr. Ahmad Rashid Malik in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (06/16)

"The Palestinian Authority praised President Obama's remarks as 'nice beginning.'... A new chapter of U.S. Muslim world has been heralded by President Obama. He went extra thousands of miles bringing the United States and the Islamic world closer. There is nothing wrong if Muslims put expectations too high on President Obama's new diplomacy towards the Muslim world. Let's be optimistic. A ray of hope is beaconing and changes will follow and we expect that actions will be speaking louder than the words expressed by President Obama at Cairo University."

"Uncalled For U.S. Concern Over Iran's Presidential Election," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (06/16)

"Statements from the U.S. like 'we will wait for a public verdict' are tantamount to fanning unrest in Iran which could create a civil war-like situation in that country. It is not necessary that a candidate supported by the U.S. should have won the election; it is the public that decides on who wins and that verdict should be accepted. Moreover, this is Iran's internal matter and should be

resolved domestically."

"Iranian Polls: Ratification Of Ahmadinejad's Policies," an editorial in the Lahore-based independent Urdu daily "Din" (cir. 10,000) (06/16)

"International powers have made several attempts to create an opposition in Iran that can act as a tool in their hands. Protests by the reformists during the last several presidential elections in Iran could be a result of this foreign interference.... Ahmadinejad's re-election is very encouraging for Pakistan. It is due to his efforts that Pakistan and Iran have signed the gas pipeline deal and cooperation in several other areas is also under consideration. U.S. and western countries' concern at the elections is of no importance to Iran. The U.S. and the west will come back on the track as soon as the reformists' protest ends."

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)  
Patterson